

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS TO REPORTERS AFTER MEETING WITH U.S. AND ALLIED PILOTS, AS REPORTED
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U.S. offers U.N. high-tech radar

By Bill Gertz
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AVIANO, Italy — The Pentagon is offering high-technology ground radar to U.N. forces in Bosnia to pinpoint the source of future shelling, and the U.S. defense secretary says ground commanders will determine the need for any air strikes.

The radar is a state-of-the-art system that uses sensors to locate metal shells in midflight and, through computer software, can pinpoint the origin. One form is used against mortar fire and another against long-range artillery.

The U.S. offer of high-technology ground radar was made through NATO channels within the past two days, said senior officials traveling with Defense Secretary William Perry who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The radar is usually deployed with artillery that can knock out the targeted source of fire. It can also be used with command-and-control aircraft to guide air strikes to the origin of the shelling within

minutes, military officials said.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's ultimatum to Serbs to keep their guns away from Sarajevo remains in place, and air strikes could be summoned if they fall out of compliance.

"The operational commander will make the decision about air strikes, not I," Mr. Perry told reporters after meeting with a group of U.S. and allied pilots at the air base here in northern Italy, where allied planes are based.

Mr. Perry said: "It's my sense that the Serbs have moved very many of their equipment. Serb leaders have said they intend to comply, and we hope that they are right and we hope that they do because we do not want to conduct these air strikes."

Mr. Perry met here with defense ministers from Britain, Italy and the Netherlands — countries that would participate in air strikes if required.

Mr. Perry told reporters that NATO leaders had been in daily telephone contact about Bosnia but needed the "face-to-face"

meeting to discuss "what ifs."

"What if things go this way instead of that way, what should the next response be," he explained.

Future contingency plans were a major topic of discussion.

Military sources said U.S. intelligence agencies have been closely monitoring the removal of towed and self-propelled artillery from the hills around Sarajevo.

There was concern that the guns might be moved to other Muslim enclaves and used in future shelling, the sources said. "So far, we haven't seen any of that," a military officer said.

Initial strikes against any remaining Serbian artillery would be limited, Mr. Perry said. "We are talking about a very, very selective use of air power here for the purpose of stopping the slaughter in Sarajevo while peace negotiations go on," Mr. Perry said.

The defense secretary said future military contingencies will be measured by two criteria: Broader attacks must help accelerate

the peace process and must contribute to the goal of reducing civilian casualties.

Mr. Perry said NATO leaders were briefed by Adm. Jeremy Boorda, the alliance's commander in charge of all operations in the former Yugoslavia, who said air crews are at an extremely high state of military preparedness.

After reviewing a line of allied jet fighters, Mr. Perry told the pilots the terrain and weather were "terrible" in Bosnia and the objectives were "hard targets," creating a very difficult and complex operation. Targets are mixed in with civilian structures, making bombing raids "about as difficult a task as you'll ever get," he said.

NATO officials discussed how to coordinate air strikes with two commands — a NATO structure based in Italy and a U.N. Protection Force command in Sarajevo. "This is a highly unusual situation where there's one command running the air force and another command on the ground," Mr. Perry said.

NATO pilots have undertaken extensive training exercises for the past several weeks to make sure any military operations will be worked out with U.N. ground controllers, he said.

Military sources said dense clouds are forecast over the Sarajevo area for the next 60 to 90 days.

"The weather could be a hindrance to air operations, but it will not stop them completely," Mr. Perry said. F-15s equipped with special optical sighting equipment and radar could deal with the low visibility, he said.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, Gen. John Shalikashvili, who accompanied Mr. Perry to the air base, said, "While we have extraordinarily sophisticated aircraft ... you would like to have good weather so you can also have eyeballs on the target."

The four-star general said commanders have given instructions to pilots that "avoiding collateral damage is one of the highest considerations."